

INTERVIEWEE: JACK & GLADYS BURKETT

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

SUBJECT:

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TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

PY: This is an interview with Jack Burkett for the Historical Society of Palm Desert Oral History Project on June 10, 1980, at three o'clock in the afternoon at Coachella Organic Fertilizers in Thermal.

Let's talk first then about your grandfather and father coming to the area.

JB: Okay. Well, they were from Maine and migrated to California in 1905. My grandfather was a carpenter, and he settled in Long Beach. And due to the fact of my father having asthma and couldn't breathe too well, they came down to the desert and bought this property that they could homestead. So they homesteaded it and built a small home on the place. And actually my father stayed here when he was in his early teens by himself for a number of years. And they would come on weekends

or whenever they could, the father and mother would, to help out. There was no well on the ranch at first. He had to carry his water clear from Point Happy. He carried it by horseback down to the ranch. It was about a mile and a half distance.

GB: To Indian Wells.

JB: Yes, Indian Wells, in that area.

PY: Actually, where was the homestead?

JB: Well, it's still there. It's at 47250 Washington Street, which would be a mile approximately south of one eleven. And the property is still in the family name, a portion of it. My son lives there now with his three children. And actually five generations of Burketts have lived on that property, and still live there. And, of course, they had all the problems of no water, no electricity, and my father came as far as Thermal to work when he was a young boy, fifteen, sixteen years old to become a mechanic. And my mother, she came to Thermal and lived with the wasn't it? She said yesterday.

GB: White.

JB: Whites and the Whites, and they had a grocery store in Thermal. And she stayed there and went to high school. Went two years in high school at the old CV High

Rode the old Model T Ford bus that you see that they have in Indio at the present time. They've restored it or one like it.

GB: She was in the first graduating class that graduated from CV High.

JB: Then when they met and married, well, they decided they would live out of the area, and up there in Van Nuys. Old place called Mission Acres, to be exact. My father opened up a service station and garage there. And that's where I was born. And then when I was five years old, they came back to the homestead. Then my grandmother passed away and left my grandfather by himself. He was living here full time then. And they came back then. And the first school I went to was the little one-room school up on top of the sand dune behind Carl Gray.

GB: Bray.

JB: Bray, is it? Studio. And there was a windmill and a few trees. And we had to walk that distance from the ranch there. No buses. Didn't have too many experiences because we didn't go to that school very long. It was pretty much of a hardship walking that way. And then there was snakes to be concerned about. And today a mother wouldn't let her child walk two blocks to a school,

let alone walk a mile and a half across the desert, which you had to do. Used to go as far as to Point Happy Date Garden and then with other children there. Then we'd walk through the path and on up there.

PY: Where was the date gardens?

JB: Point Happy Date Gardens.

GB: Still there.

JB: It's still there with a lot of houses there along Washington Street, and that belonged to C. D. Clark. They developed that ranch. And my father and grandfather worked there building those houses for the main home, the guest house, stables. Mr. Clark raised Arabian horses there. That's what he did for a past time. He was a wealthy person, retired. Fact the first horses, the original horses that were raised there were given to the Kelloggs. That's where the Kellogg people got their horses that they started their Arabian Horse Farms up by Pomona. They came from that ranch. We have photographs of the horses and some Arabs that came across when they were imported, trainers. And Mother's still got some of the photographs. I seen them not too long ago. But there's a lot of recorded history on the Clarks already, I'm sure, and their activities there.

But we had a lot of problems. When we got back to the desert, the well wasn't working and we had to carry water. My grandfather carried water home from the La Quinta Hotel, that far. My father was a mechanic in the Buick garage in Indio at that time. He'd bring ice home at noon time and again at night time. So we had really no conveniences at all. It was just a two-room house there at that time and one tree, one pepper tree. But they started building shortly after. It was about a year and a half before they was able to get the pump to pump water again. Quite a bit, you know, work to get it done. Got the water going. And I think it was about 1931 or 1932 before we got electricity in. First thing my father bought was a big GE refrigerator and an electric fan. And we were really happy then. That was before evaporative coolers. Do you have a little input there, Gladys?

GB: No, go ahead.

JB: Doing fine? Well, there was a lot of, on today's standards, there was a lot of problems, but you didn't realize they were problems because you didn't know any different, you know. The biggest thrill we had was going to the Saturday afternoon matinee in Indio at the

Polly's Theatre. It was downtown on Fargo at that time. We had the normal problems of snakes. Got one sidewinder in the house one time. Come up to the back yard, of course. And we didn't have too many neighbors to speak of. The children at the Clark Ranch; of course, they were all from Mexican families. Had that problem with communicating, you know, but we got along real good. Enjoyed ourselves.

PY: Any other neighbors?

JB: Pardon.

PY: Any other neighbors?

JB: Well, we had the Pattersons.

GB: Pedersons.

JB: Pedersons were the closest neighbor actually. And, of course, they were a young couple with no children at that time until they had two boys after we were half grown, you might say, before they came along. Any children that came to the ranch usually come out from Indio. Kids that we'd met, went to school with, and they come and spend three or four days at a time. George Shepard, Maureen Shepard's son, who owns the Shepard Jewelry Store. Howard Gilbert. He's still here. Then the Lawrences. Of course, Frank Lawrence and his

wife lived out there on the other side of Indian Wells. They had the children of our age. We went to school with them. Patricia Lawrence and Richards, Barbara, Betty and what was the other one's . . . Haven't seen them in years. They're gone.

GB: See Pat Richards once in awhile.

JB: Yes. Then we had the Carmeddys, not Carmeddys. Ames, Howard Ames and his wife lived across the storm drain. It would be over there on Dunes Palm Road. And we'd walk over there once in awhile. Then at that time there were a few hermits in the area that lived in small houses against the mountain. One in between the Ames and our place. What is that old hermits' building now?

lived in one. He used to live clear over by Highway 86, but he was always going across the desert looking for artifacts, arrowheads and beads. He had quite a collection.

GB: Tell them about going to the hotel to the

JB: Oh, yes. With a swimming pool. There were a few over at La Quinta. And in the summertime when the guests weren't there the different caretakers would let us go swimming. And we'd go as far as, you know, where Doc Gurley's home is? Well, that belonged to the . . . well,

Frank Lawrence took care of the ranch and had permission. We'd use that swimming pool up there. And go as far as Indian Wells to the old Gillette Rosenbergs.

PY: Was that the Billickeys that had it then?

JB: Billickeys, right. Yes. Billickeys. And, of course, the Desert Club came along in the early thirties. We got up to buy a lifetime membership for twenty dollars in those days. And we had one, and we'd walk clear over there. And that was a good three-mile walk to get to go swimming. And my youngest brother was born on the ranch. No air coolers. Nothing but a fan, July.

PY: Does your mother talk about that incident?

JB: Oh, yes.

GB: I wish you could talk to her.

JB: Yes, you should talk to my mother and father. We were up there yesterday to talk with them, but my dad's in very poor health. And we'll work on it, see if we can't arrange it. They'd have a lot more basic information for you than I can give you. Of course, Carl Woodhouse was somewhat of a neighbor, but he was still four or five miles away from us. And further than that, you went by road.

PY: Where was the Woodhouse Ranch?

JB: Well, it was on the corner of Jefferson and Avenue 50.

GB: It's still there.

JB: Portions of it. The ranch is still there, but the original homes aren't there anymore.

PY: I understand he built furniture. Didn't have a reputation for it.

JB: Not that I know of. He might have in his early days, but he'd become a tractor dealer in the late thirties.

PY: It was probably a hobby then.

JB: Yes and he drilled wells. Yes, he drilled wells, too.

PY: Do you remember who drilled your well?

JB: Yes. Not the first one, I don't know. Could have been Kelly. I believe it was, I'm not sure. But then the last well drilled was in thirty-five. What was the man who had the boats in San Diego?

GB: Johnny something.

JB: Yes. but they were well drillers also.

GB: What was the name of the man that your dad worked for

JB: No, I don't. I just can't think of it.

PY: So your father was helping drill wells as well?

JB: Oh, yes. Yes, and he even helped pave the first road to Palm Springs. He worked along with Ernie Chapin, you know not the young boy. They worked

together. Drove the big old tractor and pulled the sand trailers. And have to oil the wheels as they'd go along the road. The first stretch of road ran out, tubed out, where Palm Desert is now, the paved road, about ten or twelve miles out of Indio. And then it was dirt road from there to Banning. It would take them from in the early morning until late in the evening to drive that distance to the desert. Just one chuck hole after another. Then I'm sure you're aware that there used to be a watering station out there in Palm Desert. The county maintained a well, and the man there used to supply water for teams and cars, too.

PY: In Palm Desert?

JB: Yes.

PY: No, now that you mention it.

JB: Yes. Yes, there was one there.

PY: Where was it located, do you know?

JB: Well, it would be closer to the Rancho Mirage area, along by the mountains there, as I understand it. That was before my time. It didn't last too long, but they had to have water, so the county put in a well there. My father knows a lot of the different early settlers that I'm not acquainted with at all that were gone by

the time we came back to the desert, many of them. They used to bring ice clear from Thermal to the ranch. We'd just have it once a week.

GB: Then a wagon, they'd go take it down to get their groceries on Saturday. And they'd get a big chunk of ice, and they'd cover it with newspapers and quilts and take it home. And it would last through Sunday afternoon so they'd have ice for iced tea and lemonade on Sunday.

JB: Yes.

GB: Jack's mother was telling yesterday that they went for a ride on Sunday, and it got to Palm Springs and they had to stop for gas. And there was an old hand-type pump there right about where the Desert Hotel, Desert Bilt . . . not the Biltmore, the Desert . . .

JB: Desert Inn, wasn't it?

GB: Desert Inn in Palm Springs.

JB: The old one.

GB: And there was a little grocery store there, and the post office was there. And the post lady, she'd put up the mail on the inside of this building they had a place that where she'd put the mail in the slots around. People would come pick up their mail. And when they got there to get the gas, why they had to wait and nobody was

in there at all. And finally some lady stuck her head out from the building out in back and she said, "Well, I'm milking the cow; I'll be out as soon as I get through." So they had to wait until she finished milking, then she came and pumped the gas, and they got gas. They still had a dirt route through Palm Springs at that time.

PY: When was that?

GB: No, this would be

JB: No, would be the early twenties. Yes.

GB: I wish you could talk to you know, because she has so many things to tell.

JB: Her memory is really good on that, too. Really sharp.

PY: Has Coachella Valley
Society?

GB: They moved out of the valley about eight, ten years ago, didn't they?

JB: Yes. Moved to Cherry Yes, he knows a lot of people, but he never did belong to any of the social groups or anything. He just never did do those things. They got interviewed about fifteen years ago by somebody out at the ranch. He was writing a book. Never did hear how it come out.

PY: Well, I sure haven't seen a book in the library

JB: No. We went to Roosevelt School, of course, and the old schools were out in back. Those buildings are still there as far as I know. They were up to a few years ago. Of course, you wonder how a teacher could teach under the circumstances they did have to teach in those days. I mean, there was nothing but one electric fan in a room. And no air conditioning at all. No swamp coolers as we know today. Of course, the railroad, being the terminal, had a lot of kind of center of activity around Indio for years. They had a dining room. Quite interesting to go over there in the afternoon and see the train and the people going through. That was a past time, too.

PY: How did you get around? It sounded like . . . Would you walk distances?

JB: Well, no, we used to walk in between Indio and home quite a bit, you know. Not everybody had a car, you know. We had one and my father would go to work. And, of course, we'd ride into town and play in Indio with our friends, you know, during the summertime. And a lot of times the kids would come out, spend two or three days at a time at our place. They were glad to get out of Indio and we had

shade trees. And it would break up the normal routine of the summer, you know, by going back and forth. Of course, there was a couple of summers we went to Banning. My mother had a heart condition. We'd go up there and rent a cabin and stay there once in awhile. That didn't happen very often. I know a lot of this will come as you go along, you know, but you're thinking about wanting to know, but it's hard to think of everything right now.

PY: You were talking a little about Joe Valenzuela, who made the tiles for La Quinta Hotel, and a lot of other people around.

JB: Well, there was a fellow there that made Spanish tiles right up against the mountain, which is behind the hotel as we know it today. And quite a little enterprise there, and that ran up until the fifties, I believe, before he abandoned that project. Had a kill there. Made good Spanish tile and hauled all over southern California and sell it in different places. In those days the hotel was quite famous, you know. It used to be quite expensive to stay there, twenty-five dollars a day. Hard to believe that twenty-five dollars as being that much, you know, but in those days that's what the going rate was there. You can't even rent a motel room for thirty dollars a day

now. A lot of famous people stayed there. Marie Dresler used to own a home there, and she'd ride a bicycle up Washington Street. We'd see her going. She'd ride her bike up there and back. I just don't know all the people that stayed there. I know the flagpole was given to them by a guest of the hotel, a lady from Washington, I believe. She had it shipped out and erected that big flagpole. It's still there today. Was a gift to them.

PY: Do you remember the construction of the hotel?

JB: No. No, it was built, you know, by the time my folks came back to the desert. Even though the basic of it was there, the little cottages and the dining room and the lobby. It was all there. No actual construction, I don't know anything about it other than the fact that my father and grandfather worked on it. It was not a weigh station for missionaries or anything else. It was a commercial adventure, that's what it was, really. I remember reading an article a few years ago how the padres used to stop over there and rest and one thing and another. That's not the way it was.

PY: You mean to say, they were making it out as a hotel as a place where padres were stopping to rest?

JB: Yes. It was built in like, you know, 1913 or 1914,

somewhere along in there. I'm not sure of the year.

Don't quote me as to the year. My father could tell you because, like I say, he worked on the first building that was built there. And it didn't go back much before 1910, that's for sure. It was after that that they started building. Of course, the subdivision above was built in the early thirties. Never did materialize in those days. They put a lot of money putting those roads in. And very few people lived up there then.

PY: Is that where the present subdivision is?

JB: Yes. Of course, the Avenue 52 with the dirt road went to the hotel from this end of the valley. And then one eleven as we know it today, but of course, it had a totally different route. By the time you got down to where the new Stater Bros., the new market, it would turn to your left and go north one mile. Then it would turn right and go east another mile. And then it would turn and go north another mile to Miles. It would just zigzag in town. Then I can always remember the first thing I seen in Indio, as you come down Miles, well, there was a big water tower for the Southern Pacific Depot that was right in the middle of Miles Avenue as it extended across the railroad track. But you could see that very plainly.

Of course, that was there up until a few years ago, wasn't it? Probably about one of the last things they tore down of the old depot.

PY: Living at Point Happy, would you consider that an area in and of itself or was it considered part of Indian Wells or La Quinta?

JB: It really didn't have any identity. I mean, as far as an area in those days. Point Happy was actually the point. Some people said it was someplace else, but really that was Point Happy is the only name that I've ever known to be called. And where it got the name, I don't know. I just imagine when they got to that point, they were pretty happy that all that desert was behind them and you'd figure coming from Tucson and Yuma and across the desert, when they got to that point, they had it made then, really. The old stagecoach ruts went right across our property. And you could go out here and see them today, what's left of them. And they're still there. But most of them are covered up because of all the swimming pools that were put in at Shadow Palms. What do they call that subdivision now, the Show Shadow Palms?

GB: Yes, right across the way.

JB: They'd haul all the dirt out there and just dump it on

the open desert and they covered most of those ruts up.

But those ruts were actually the stagecoach ruts.

GB: There's probably still some there.

JB: There's still a few there. That was the Bradshaw, wasn't it?

GB: Yes. Bradshaw.

JB: Bradshaw Stage Line ran that way. Of course, it would come down the Mendos Palm, go across the dry Salton Sea, and go over by Rock. And then I guess they could get water at that point, and then they came up the, that side of the valley, cut across there.

PY: What year did you actually go to the school at Point Happy?

JB: Well, it would be twenty-seven, twenty-seven, 1927.

PY: Was that one of the last years that it was functioning?

JB: Well, you know, I really can't remember whether it went for another year or two. It didn't seem like it stayed there very long after that. I started riding into, going to school in Indio. And my father would take me because it was just too far to walk, you know, for a first grader. And there was a prize at school out on the north end of Jackson Street, which was known by Mrs. Carmeny. And I went there for one season, you might say. Then we started

going to the Roosevelt School in Indio.

GB: Wasn't that called the Sun School?

JB: No. No, it was just Mrs. Carmeny. She had two boys.

I remember Dave and I don't remember the other boy's name.

GB: They had the newsstand there, didn't they?

JB: Yes, Carmeny's Newsstand. Of course, the big excitement in those times, of course, was the building of the aqueduct and all the influx of men that helped build it. And the activity in Indio. And my father with the mechanics of the Belyea Truck Line that hauled all the materials for the aqueduct. Of course, I'd get to go with him quite often out there and help him. Hand him wrenches, and one thing and another. One of the trips out there, the driver of the truck asked my dad if I could ride in with him. It was out at Hard Desert Center and they were bringing a big crane in. And I wanted to do that, of course, and Dad said yes. And we left Desert Center about eight in the morning, got in Indio at five o'clock that evening, all day. I think the fastest we ever got up to was eight miles an hour.

GB: It was all chain-drive truck, you know, and it was just chain drive.

JB: They had just completed the Indio Hill Graded, we called

it then. It still is called Indio Grade and Hill. And they had to have a truck on the front to pull the trailer and one on the back. And minimum brakes, so they'd just have to gear them down and let the compression of the engine hold them back on the hill. Quite an experience. And that was the big thing, of course, in the thirties, was that aqueduct. Heart of the depression that everybody else was suffering throughout the country, we didn't really know much about it here because of that activity. Brought in quite a bit of money.

PY: When did you get phones out at the ranch? Robert Tope was saying that they put in a funny line, you know, in the early twenties. And they sort of strung it on whatever they could find, the and barbed wire fences and everything.

JB: Well, I imagine, I really don't know when the phones went out that way, but we didn't have phones at our place. It was quite a luxury to have a telephone.

PY: Did you ever have a phone back at the old house?

JB: No, never. No, to get the power in, it cost us eight hundred dollars, and that was like a fortune in those days, to get the power from the road back to the house. That took a lot of doing to get that power in. And you

had to pay for the running of the line to bring it in. But even after 1945, after the war was over, and I came back to the desert here with my wife, and we lived in a little house there on the Clark Ranch which was on the west side of the mountains. Today it's the Balboa Tennis Club.

GB: Yes, Racquet Club. They were building right where our house was. There's still a well there, and we built back there probably. Maybe not quite that far off the road.

JB: Yes.

GB: Half mile, and it was just a little sand road over the dune

JB: Two rooms.

GB: We had two rooms and a screen porch.

PY: Was that a homestead, part of the original homestead?

JB: No.

GB: That was part of Clark's property.

JB: Yes.

GB: All that was back where the Racquet Club is now. The Tennis Club

PY: Oh, she owned all of that.

GB: She owned all that on the other side.

PY: Now didn't Lorraine Shepard's mother and stepfather own the little store right below that?

GB: Yes.

JB: That's right.

GB: Well, they were just on further than we were.

PY: Oh, west.

GB: West, yes.

JB: There was a dead palm trees along the road there. That's where their store and post office was at. Yes. Yes, there was, oh, I think, about half a dozen cabins there, and they rented them out. That was about it.

PY: I should imagine that was a source of entertainment around there for kids growing up.

JB: Well, I can always remember some of the kids would walk from the school down there to buy some candy or whatever. And I remember some of the kids would buy a can of beans. And Mr. Boldeno was his name, he'd take and open the can of beans and dump them on a piece of cardboard and give it to them, you know. And then they 'd get salt crackers from him and he'd eat beans and crackers. Quite a treat, you know. (chuckle) Far cry from the lunch that they have in school today.

PY: I used to get my mother to give me dry jello for lunch.

(chuckle) Just out of the package. She thought I was insane. Beans and crackers sound a little better than that.

JB: Now we got a phone out there where we lived there on the Clark Ranch after the war. And the Newmans still had the telephone company. And getting new construction material was really quite scarce. And we'd put our request in for a telephone, and he told me that he'd get it as soon as he could. We waited about six, eight months, and one day a construction crew came out and put up the poles. A few days later they brought the wire in. Then a month went by, and another month went by. We finally got ahold of Mr. Newman and he said, "Well, I can't get any telephone poles to bring the line in." And I said, "They're already in. All you got to do is send your serviceman in and drop the wire and put the phone in." So he took care of that right away. He hadn't even realized that the job was completed. Of course, he took care of everything, Mr. Newman did. Picked up all the money from the pay telephones and did his bookkeeping. And everybody used to complain about the telephone service, but I got to say, I think it's better than we have today. Really and truly.

GB: You shouldn't put that on tape.

PY: I never would have said it on the tape.

JB: I'd put it on tape. But really, you can't believe the problem. We never had this kind of problem.

GB: Well, when your mother was down here, she worked for the telephone company and she was entertained.

JB: Yes. High school girls.

GB: At her office in Thermal.

JB: Yes.

GB: They had their main office in Thermal, and she was one of the operators.

JB: Switchboard operator.

GB: She was a switchboard operator.

PY: How many people did you have on your line when you got your precious phone?

GB: I don't really know.

JB: There was two or three people on our line, wasn't there? I think it was a ten-party line, but there wasn't that many people around.

PY: That's real lucky.

JB: Oh, yes. We was lucky to have it.

PY: How could you when you lived on the Clark Ranch?

JB: Well, my father in later years in the early forties went

to work for them. And then kind of managed the ranch. When I got out of the service, they had this small house that she let us live in for free. All we had to go was get water up. The well didn't, there was a well there, but no pump. And we had to scrounge around and find an old pump and a one-horse gasoline motor to pump water into a five-hundred-gallon tank. Then we found an old pressure pump without a switch on it. Every time you wanted water, you had to turn the switch on.

GB: Every time we had to fill a tank, if Jack wasn't there, I couldn't start the pump. And Jack said Jack's dad would come over and start it. Gasoline engine and I couldn't crank it. He'd come over and crank it and get it started, but I could shut it off. And I'd let it run until the tank was full, and then I'd shut it off. Then if he wanted water, why you turned the pressure pump on and pumped up fifteen, twenty pounds of pressure or whatever, and you turned the pressure pump off.

JB: But in 1945 and 1946 you couldn't buy very much after the war in the way of supplies. It was just short, really short. I was driving a truck in those days and I'd be gone for four or five days at a time. I'd have to be over there. Our two boys at that time and the wetbacks

passed through at nighttime, and she'd hear the water running at the back door.

GB: They'd come and get water.

JB: Come and get water and never bother them.

GB: In the daytime they'd want food.

JB: Give them a bucket of water, and sometimes you'd give them a few sandwiches, too, didn't you.

GB: Well, I used to give them bread and some canned goods and things. They wouldn't come to the house, but they'd beg. And I'd set it out on the porch and go back in the house. They'd come and pick it up and go on.

PY: Were they afraid?

GB: They were afraid.

PY: Of being caught?

GB: I suppose. I don't know. Maybe they were afraid if they came close, I would turn them in or something, too. I really don't know. But they didn't want to get in any trouble and they didn't want to come. But then I had a good dog, too. I always kept the dog in the house, and kept him, you know. When I opened the door, I had the dog with the collar and they wouldn't come near, but they would still, you know . . .

PY: You were talking earlier about the Clark Ranch, saying that there were many Mexicans that were working on that

ranch. Were Mexicans common in the area at that point?

JB: Oh, quite a few. Yes. There were a lot of, well, there wasn't anywhere near the numbers that they are today in relation to the percentages of white people and Mexican people. But in those days the Mexican people owned a lot of big ranches here in the valley. Not like what, you know, the general feeling today is that we took everything away from them. They never did have anything, which is really not true. I mean, you can look on the county records and see who the previous owners of a lot of choice property in this valley belonged to. And they were good farmers, very stable people. And, of course, we had a lot of migrant Mexicans that come and work in the season. But as far as them having any abuse, you know, being a minority group of people, there was some of that, yes. Theatre, they sat on one side of the theatre and the white people sat on the other side. And they had a Mexican school here for them, but they would, you know if a Mexican child could speak English the day that he started to school, he didn't go to that school. He went to the same schools the white children did. And it went through to the sixth grade, the Mexican school, which is the old Lincoln School, setting right

there across the street from the Security Pacific Bank.

GB: There's a savings and loan right in there.

JB: Right in there. You didn't have the racial problems in those days you have today.

GB: What they concentrated on there at Lincoln was teaching those children to speak English, and as soon as they could speak English well enough, then they were transferred to the other schools.

JB: They weren't put there just because they were Mexicans. What I'm trying to say is that just the language variance if they overcome that, then they'd go right over to the Roosevelt School. But most of them sold their ranches as time went by, the and the Gonzaleses, and just numerous ones. We had Dr. Jennings. I don't know whether you ever heard of him. He was a school doctor. He drove a Model T Ford. His biggest project was pink eye, which was really a predominant factor here in the desert. The kids would have pink eye, and it was really bad. That was the biggest job he had. The school nurses, they were doctoring eyes all the time, it seemed like. Don't have it today.

PY: That's an infection, isn't it?

GB: It's very contagious.

JB: Gnats would carry it. Of course, I don't think the gnats were any worse then. I think it's just everybody . . .

I guess they were worse. Evidently they seem to have it under control today.

PY: They've got a mosquito abatement.

JB: Yes.

PY: Project.

JB: Dr. Jennings, he was quite a doctor. He lived right south on the other side of Thermal. He had a ranch. It was in the family up until maybe fifteen, twenty years ago. He stayed in that old Model T Ford, what he used for years and years.

PY: Do you think you were more associated with Indio because of the fact your father was working there? Or was there some feeling that that area really looked towards Indio for services and education?

JB: Well, you had to, really. I mean there was nothing west of Indio at all except for one store that we talked about earlier. And that was it until you got to Cathedral City. Though Indio was the closest place of commerce at all. And we had an Indio address out there years ago, didn't we? Yes. All the mail comes to Indio.

GB: The street where we lived, Washington, used to be Marshall

Street.

JB: Yes, it was Marshall.

GB: It was Marshall up until about thirty years ago. I don't know when they changed. I think when John was, well, we'd already moved over there, hadn't we, when they changed that?

JB: That's twenty years. About twenty-five years ago when they changed it.

PY: What was it named after, do you know?

GB: Well, I think the original Washington Street that started over there, like it comes through Palm Desert, you know, Palm City, I mean, and it went across. That Washington where it comes through Palm City would have went straight on through. There's a power line that takes off and goes straight. It would have ended up in the cove. And that was the original Washington Street. Then Marshall was the next street. But now, see, they've curved over into it and they changed Marshall to Washington. In the old days it was quite confusing because there was a Marshall Street in Indio. And it's just a short street in Indio there. And as soon as you crossed, you know, what is now one eleven, why then Marshall Street was out there. So we had some confusion on names there. People

could say, well, there's no such number. But then about twenty . . .

Side 2 of 2:

PY: Clark Ranch.

GB: There wasn't very much up there, really. The hotel was there and there were a few houses, but most of them, I mean, there just wasn't hardly any building out. And one bad part about it, the lots, when they were laid out, they were laid out so narrow. I think most of those lots are only fifty or sixty to seventy-five feet wide. And you just can't hardly build a house on that. But there was very little building in there until, oh I'd say about fifteen, twenty years ago when they started building. And it's just real slow in getting started to build.

PY: I'm trying to get an idea of how come where you were on the Clark Ranch. Was that considered then part of some Indian Wells grouping?

GB: The little house where we lived first was considered Indian Wells because we were just, we were not very far from where the little store was. We were on the other side of the mountain up in that cove where the tennis club is now. That's where we were at first. And then

about twenty-five years ago we moved over onto the Clark Ranch itself. Right there where those big iron gates are as you go south on Washington. You'll see those big iron gates.

PY: Point Happy.

GB: Yes. We lived right there in that first house on the right. And we moved into that, and that was just twenty-five years ago because our third son was born right after we moved over there. Sonny's twenty-five, so I know. And, of course, that was, I guess they considered that part of La Quinta even then. That was closest. But, of course, there was never much in La Quinta, really. We had to go to Indio for everything. Then, of course, everything just started building and especially after Mrs. Clark passed away. Everything changed there. The estate was all divided up and some relatives received part and Claremont College got the bulk of her estate. And she owned property in Idyllwild. She had property at Santa Fe Springs and oil wells up there and everything. Nephews received, you know, the bulk of her property. But the ranch itself was given to Claremont College, and then there was a real estate agent that had bought in on part of it. And William Dupont bought part of that

property after she passed away. And he owned that for some time. And then I think he sold it to, he was the one that built the house up in the pass. Have you noticed that house that's up in the pass? I don't know if you can even see it now, as you go down Washington. But you look up in the pass, or if you're coming from the other way, there's a whole kind of where the mountain comes down, there's a house up in there. Beautiful home. And he built outdoor tennis courts for his wife who was a tennis pro. And he built that mainly for her. And this outdoor tennis courts. There's, you know, grass court and part asphalt courts, too, so she could play tennis. And Jack could tell you her name. I don't even, I don't remember her name.

PY: Was that Alice Marble?

GB: I think it was.

PY: Yes, you can see that house as you're going one eleven east. You can see it sitting up there. It's got a lot of green lawn around it.

GB: William Dupont built that. He'd come out to the ranch once in awhile. We'd see him. And he'd usually come out, I suppose, I don't know how he came, by train or how he came, we'd see him walking around the ranch. And

he'd always be wearing an old felt hat, you know. And he'd usually have an old car and it looked, I mean, just an ordinary old Chevy is what he drove when he was out here. You wouldn't think he had a dime to his name. He'd walk around the ranch and didn't ever spend much time out here. They built that fabulous home up there. And our kids were raised up there. At that time there was two swimming pools on the ranch. There was one down between Mrs. Clark's house and the guest house. And then there was another one up toward the mountains. It was more like a reservoir. It was quite deep. It must have been about at least twelve feet deep and it was probably forty feet long and maybe twenty-five feet wide. And it was mainly used just to hold water, but we did swim in that. It was dangerous because it was deep all the way across, but there was ladders down into it. But we would go up there and swim because usually Mrs. Clark would have, she didn't want us down in her pool unless she wasn't there or if she had guests especially, why, of course, we didn't bother. But she wasn't there, why then, of course, we could use her pool down at the house which was very nice.

PY: What was your husband doing at that point on the Clark Ranch?

GB: Well, Jack's dad was still working there. He was taking care of the ranch for Mrs. Clark. And they had a big two-story house there. And then his dad and mother were living in that. And Dad was taking care of the ranch for Mrs. Clark at that time. When Jack's dad moved over there right after the beginning of the war, and Mrs. Clark had Japanese gardeners to take care of all her, she had beautiful gardens, flower gardens, just fabulous. And, of course, when they were sent to, they were sent over to to the internment camp. And that left her with all of her gardening and everything that she did, you know. And about that time that Jack's dad moved over onto the ranch and moved into one of those houses and went to work for her all the time. Before that, he'd just done the part-time work and carpentering and things like that. But after that then he moved onto the ranch. And that was right after the war started.

PY: Do you know when they built that ranch?

GB: I don't know. I really don't know. It was way before I came. The first time I was down here was in about, well, Eastertime in forty-two was the first time that I was ever down here. And then it was just, you know, come down for the weekend and go back.

PY: What happened to the old homestead while they were living on the Clark Ranch? (Door slam) living in it?

GB: No. There was nobody living in it, and after your dad moved to the Clark Ranch, that house, that was torn down shortly after that, wasn't it?

JB: The one that dad lived in?

GB: Yes. The old house.

JB: It was a two-story house and they tore it down. And that's about the time actually she passed away, Mrs. Clark.

GB: That was about in forty-two or forty- . . .

JB: Forty-eight, forty-seven. Remember Johnny was just born.

GB: Yes, that's right. She passed away, I think, in forty-seven.

JB: Forty-seven.

PY: I was asking when the Clark Ranch was actually built. Was it there when you moved out to Point Happy?

JB: Well, it was there when I, yes, it was already established.

GB: That would have been in twenty-seven when you came back here, so it had to have been before that then.

JB: Somewhere around the . . . The folks would know when they built it; I'm sure of that. They can tell you pretty close. You hear a lot of stories about it, you know,

and the people that own it. And some of them are, you know, there's errors in the stories. You know, stories grow and shrink sometimes with different people telling them. But the Clark people came from Peoria, Illinois, and they were retired. And they were in the whiskey business. The D. O. Clark Whiskey. And moved to Santa Fe Springs, bought eighty acres and planted it to oranges. Built a nice home. They discovered oil on it. Then when it had, what was it, thirteen gushers on that eighty acres after their wells. Mrs. Clark was quite a famous woman. She rode across Russia on the first transcontinental train that Russia built. And she wrote with Joseph Stalin's mother. And give her a golden sickle. She entertained people from Nazi, Germany, before it was a threat to our society in those days. Entertained a lot of people from all over the world.

GB: She was at the Olympics in Berlin in 1936 and sat in Hitler's box.

JB: Well, right beside it, her box was beside box.

GB: Thirty-six.

JB: She was slated to be on the step on the grass, but it wasn't the one that burned up on that trip. She decided

to return to Germany by boat and not go on that zeppelin.

That's how close she come to death that time.

PY: Did they move to that ranch or did they buy that ranch because of the La Quinta Hotel in the proximity?

JB: No, Mr. Clark went down there and looked it over, and traveled all over the world, very wealthy people, and he said this was the finest spot in the world. So they built a home there.

PY: That's amazing because there were really no trees here, oh, there was this, was there mesquite around?

JB: Mesquite, that's all, yes. You just picked it. He didn't live very long after he built the place. But he liked it.

GB: Well, they planted date trees in there, though, that way.

JB: Yes. Planted date trees.

GB: And he started to raise Arabian horses. He imported Arabians from Arabia. And they built big stables in there. They had training tracks and arenas and everything.

PY: Is that all on the west side?

GB: West side of the road, Washington.

JB: And between Washington and the mountains.

PY: Oh, but it wasn't where you home was later?

GB: No. Not on the west side, no.

PY: I meant west from the mountains.

GB: No, no, it was all east of the mountains.

JB: Yes.

GB: Over where that subdivision is now, where all those houses are.

JB: See, when she passed away, she gave the bulk of her estate to Claremont College and the ranch, too. But they only kept it a short time and sold it. They sold it to William Dupont, president of the Delaware Bank, and part of the Dupont family. He only bought the place for his health. Came to Palm Springs. He had a bad cough and was along in years and helped him. He figured he'd better have a home out here and he bought that ranch and built the home up on the mountain. You know, the home in the saddle, but he never lived in it.

GB: But he built those tennis courts, I was telling her, you know, the tennis courts that he built up there.

JB: Yes. When he'd come on the ranch, you couldn't tell him from anybody. He looked like an old midwest farmer, drove a Chevrolet car, pair of coveralls, smoked a pipe.

GB: And old felt hat.

JB: You wouldn't know that he controlled a large percentage of the wealth of the United States. A good percentage

of it, I'm sure.

PY: And came from a long line of wealth himself.

GB: Yes.

JB: And you couldn't tell it to look at him. But I think that's true about a lot of truly wealthy people, you never know it. I mean, they're not like the people who pretend to be wealthy and put on a lot of glamour.

PY: The people in the 1920s and thirties that were in that area in La Quinta, were they mainly on ranches?

JB: Yes, I'd say that. There was no homes per se like there is today. Nobody just lives in the country. No, it's just ranches. Yes.

GB: She was asking about the time when they really started to build up La Quinta. It was after the war before there was much of anything going up there at all, wasn't there?

JB: Didn't really happen in the past twenty years, I'd say. La Quinta didn't really start developing until then. They developed Palm Desert first, you know, and La Quinta is just starting to grow in the past twenty years, really. I guess about twenty years ago they put the golf course in and started building the new clubhouse and those homes. Probably not even twenty years.

GB: Well, the kids were caddying over there. I know John and

Larry, they used to caddy over at La Quinta at the golf course when they were twelve, thirteen years old.

PY: Was it mainly then a continued attraction for people with wealth, or was there some sense of what's going on now in terms of single family homes for working people?

JB: It was just an attraction for wealthy people, yes.

There wasn't many working people up in there. Very few. It just never did catch on. Of course, the lot sizes, you know, were deficit to anybody, fifty-foot lots. They just never did move.

GB: Well, now they are.

JB: Yes.

PY: Yes.

JB: You could look in the daily news forty years ago and you could have bought them probably fifty percent of those lots for taxes, back taxes. And there wasn't very much, maybe two or three hundred dollars. People just abandoned them, give them up with no hope. (laughter)

PY: Were you around when they thought about putting in Lake Korea?

JB: Oh, yes. Yes. Yes, first job I had when I got out of the service and came back here, bought a couple trucks, and I hauled ninety percent, I'll say, of all the cements

went in the canal up here. So we hauled cement from below Mecca clear above Indio. Did it all by hand.

It was all sacked cement, no bulk trucks. Come by rails. We'd have to unload these boxcars and haul it up to the canal. So we had a little bit of a hand in the building of the Coachella Canal. Left the two fingerprints out there, I'll tell you. Blood.

PY: What impact did that have on La Quinta and Point Happy?

GB: The canal?

PY: Any?

JB: None. It didn't do anything to help the farming, you know. I mean they did run water out onto Washington Street, but, and you know, before Proposition 13, the taxes were so high. Property taxes, you couldn't afford to farm the ground, and it wasn't developing very fast. So there was very little farming out there, actual farming.

GB: We have canal water that comes around, it comes up Washington to the far north and it ends right just beyond our property.

JB: Yes.

GB: And it's pumped there. And there is canal water to ours, and we're the very end of the line there.

JB: We only used it for a few years. I imagine they'll take it out some day.

PY: You're not using it now then?

JB: No.

GB: There's no farming out there now.

JB: No farming. No, everybody is waiting for development, you know.

PY: There's a very, looks like an older home in the Desert Club. It's east of Eisenhower built the one that intersects it. It's right over by the club.

GB: You mean on Avenue 52?

PY: I don't know which one. Yes, it would be one of the numbered streets. There's an older home stuck in next to the mountain there.

JB: There's a ranch in there.

PY: Yes, it's a large section of property.

JB: Oh, yes. Yes, that was there in the thirties. I can't recall the name of the person that owned it, but I remember he was on the, he was a councilman for the city of Los Angeles or something like that, in that category. He was a city official. He had that ranch. Don't remember the names. The street, I'm sure, was named Marshall. It was named after Mr. Marshall that developed

that land out there. It's some land in that area. And, of course, he owned right down there on Miles Avenue where the Clothesline is. It's called the Marshall Building. And he owned quite a bit of property. And he lost his life on that ranch out there on Marshall, down in an old well. Caved in on him. We were just kids when that happened. I remember going over there. He used to dig large pits and put centrifugal pumps in the bottom. They didn't have the turbin pumps like we have today. And they'd pump the water up this column from the depth of sixty, seventy feet and it caved in when he was in it.

PY: I can't think of anything else to ask you. You've answered most of my questions before I ever got them out.

JB: Well, I think it would be of interest that you could talk to my mother and father. We'll work on it and see if we can't do something. But they could help you an awful lot. They were more, you know, knowing the people in the really early times. They did know. There's very few of them left. I know a lot of people are on your, in his historical society today are second generation, so to speak, you know. And I'm sure they have a lot of good information you've already got.

PY: Different kinds.

JB: We thought about coming to the meeting a couple of times, but we're just so busy. Busy all the time. I'll tell you one little story in relation to the ranch that's always of interest. They just got the papers back on the homestead, and Grandfather and Grandfather and my dad were there and a car turned into the driveway and drove back. A fellow got out and introduced himself and, you know, struck up a conversation. Turned out he owned a piece of property up by Long Beach. And he kind of liked the desert, come down and like so many people who come here, they fall in love with it immediately, you know. They don't know about the sand storms and the heat and everything else. Anyway, he said he'd trade him this piece of land for the desert property that they have. Them being from Long Beach, they decided to go look at it, and they did. And Grandmother said, "Well, you couldn't raise goats on this property." Well, this fifteen, twenty acres was right on top of Signal Hill, and there was no oil discovered at that time. But that's what they could have traded for. Eighty acres of desert for fifteen acres of oil. (laughter) Of course, it was always a discussion who

rejected the trade, you know, in the family.

PY: Do you know how much they had to pay for that eighty acres homesteaded, anything at all?

JB: Just the filing fees, I imagine. I don't think it was very much on a homestead, if anything.

PY: Well, it seems to have varied. Some people had to pay and others didn't pay at all.

JB: I really don't know, don't know. No, I just think that we'd like to keep the last five acres impacked out there in the family because we, you know, so much history as far as the family is concerned. And I don't think there's very many places here where you have five generations over that length of time still in the same place.

PY: No.

JB: So it's kind of an oddity.

PY: Anyone else out there have a homestead that you know of?

JB: Oh, yes, lot of homesteads in the valley.

PY: No, I mean

JB: Yes, the Pedersons have a homestead. His father homesteaded that place. Yes.

GB: They live over by Fallbrook now. They moved about fifteen, twenty years ago.

JB: Yes, they left the desert a long time ago.. But there was quite a few homesteads. Well, I hope we've been of some help to you.

END OF INTERVIEW